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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S NATIONAL DAY
SPEECH

A) "What Have the National Day Fireworks Lit Up?"

The conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News"
editorialized (10/18):

". President Chen's National Day speech seems to have been related to the United States in many ways. First, in the beginning, rumors had it that the draft of Chen's speech had been reviewed by Washington before it was delivered; then both Washington and Tokyo responded to Chen's speech immediately, evidently indicating that they were both prepared to do so. Then when his speech failed to get the response from Beijing that was expected, President Chen went so far as to say that 'Washington had told me that Beijing would respond to it this way.' All these signs have made people wonder if Chen's cross-Straits talk was made at the request of the United States. Some other people also have speculated that Chen was trying to use this speech to alleviate cross-Straits tensions in an attempt to curry favor with the United States.

"Washington believes that the key to improved cross-Straits ties lies in 'resuming dialogue' and 'direct transportation' [across the Taiwan Strait]. In April, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly did not mind taking all the trouble of writing five paragraphs to elaborate on how both sides of the Taiwan Strait reached a consensus in the 1992 meeting about different interpretations by either side of the 'one China' principle, which also led to the Koo-Wang meetings in 1993 and 1998, respectively. . Such a move shows that Chen referred to the '1992 Hong Kong meeting' in his National Day address because the U.S. government was his planned target audience and that such a move was made at the request of the United States.

"Chen did not touch on the 'resumption of dialogue' or 'direct transportation' in his May 20 inaugural speech, so his National Day speech was like 'homework handed in late.' In Washington's eyes, the '1992 Hong Kong meeting' that Chen mentioned in his speech may sound equal to the '1992 consensus' that Washington hoped he would say. But Washington probably has failed to notice the difference between the two terms, or maybe it did not find out that Chen was 'playing with words' until now. As a result, if the National Day speech was a gift by President Chen to the United States, what could Washington be feeling now -- surprise at receiving a gift, or embarrassment at being made fun of for having complimented Chen on the 'constructive' message of his speech? ."

B) "Incrementalism or Obstructionism"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" commented in an editorial (10/18):

". By issuing another expression of goodwill to the other side, President Chen earned domestic and international praise.

"The first and direct benefit will be felt in the DPP's legislative election campaign, thanks to its rising capability to build up an image of a moderate and progressive governing force in Taiwan that can secure wider support from middle of the road voters.

"Even without a positive response from Beijing, Chen and his party has skillfully drawn support from both domestic and external audiences and affirmation on both fronts will in turn be helpful to the DPP's campaign. .

"In either case, the key priority for Taiwan's leadership is to minimize the chance of any severe crises or military confrontations [across the Taiwan Strait].

"International influence, particularly from the United States and Japan and other great powers, should play a

more significant role in both mediation and monitoring the maintenance of peace. A framework of peace is essentially needed to craft a stable and constructive cross-strait relationship. Only through talks and exchanges of different views can a predictable and institutionalized framework for cross-strait interaction be advanced."

C) "Can Chen's Gesture Be Turned into Real Policy?"

Freelance writer Ku Er-teh noted in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" (10/18):

". Chen certainly showed goodwill in his [National Day] address, although to what degree he was sincere is a little more difficult to fathom. Can this goodwill be translated into actual policy? Some would say the most important thing is how the Chinese will respond to it, but even more important is whether or not Chen's team prepare their own contingency plan prior to implementing any such policy.

"It turns out that the Executive Yuan, the Ministry of National Defense, and even the Presidential Office had no idea what Chen was going to say in his address. Based on this, it seems that his words were simply intended to communicate his good intentions, but for what purpose?

"I'm afraid that the consequences of Chen's words might not have been thought through. But at least the Americans noticed Chen's goodwill."

PAAL